

Massachusetts Water Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes for May 13, 1999

Commission Members in Attendance:

Mark P. Smith	Designee, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development
Peter C. Webber	Commissioner, Department of Environmental Management
Arleen O'Donnell	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection
Mark Tisa	Designee, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement
Joe McGinn	Designee, Metropolitan District Commission
Joe Pelczarski	Designee, Coastal Zone Management
Richard Butler	Public Member
Gary Clayton	Public Member
Frank Veale	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Mike Gildesgame	DEM
Duane Levangie	DEP
Vicki Gartland	DEM
Stephanie Lovejoy	DEM
Linda Marler	DEM
John Magenheimer	DEM
Arthur Screpetis	DEP
Michele Cobban Barden	Neponset River Watershed Association
Susan Redlich	Wastewater Advisory Committee
Arthur Johnson	DEP
Rick Dunn	DEP
Nina Danforth	DEM
Leslie DeSimone	USGS
Steve Garabedian	USGS
Elizabeth Gowen	MWRA
Nancy Ettele	MWRA
Cornelia Potter	MWRA Advisory Board
Steve Lipman	DEP
Lorraine Downey	MWRA
Peter Phippen	EOEA
Marc Zimmerman	USGS
Michele Drury	DEM

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

· Smith reported that there was a meeting of the Interbasin Transfer performance standards work group for members of the work group and those who had commented on the standards. There was a good discussion with a good input from Commission member David Rich. Commenters

have until May 14 to provide suggestions on changing the language. It is expected that the Commission will receive the standards soon with a recommendation for approval.

- The permit streamlining work group is moving forward with DEP revising the Water Management Act application so it will be better coordinated with the Interbasin Transfer application. MEPA has been contacted about using parts of the pumping test and the request for site exam as the ENF filing for municipalities, an idea they seem to support. Within a month or so there will be another draft of this effort.
- The current stay on the Canton litigation ended May 3rd and the parties agreed to another sixty day extension from that date.
- Tonight, there is a Brockton water supply meeting, looking at the potential for MWRA to expand service to a number of communities, as well as the Bluestone desalination proposal. Both of these projects will involve interbasin transfers.
- DEP's new commissioner, Lauren Liss, will be starting next week.
- Gildesgame reported that DEM's Office of Water Resources was able to backfill two technical positions. Linda Marler and John Magenheimer were introduced by Gartland who noted they will be working on a lot of the interbasin transfer issues, the precipitation program, Ipswich instream flow, drought conditions, watershed teams, etc.
- Smith asked Gartland to talk about the drought conditions and how we track the issues. She showed some of the information available from the USGS, National Weather Service and OWR, and presented the hydrologic conditions report for the state for the recent period. To make it most useful, Smith suggested that the information be disseminated as the conditions appear to be heading toward a drought. It also was suggested that the information could be put on the DEM web site monthly.
- Drury reviewed the IBT projects currently in the pipeline, as noted in the package mailed to Commission members.

Agenda Item #2: Minutes

Smith had a number of changes for the minutes of November 1998, so they will be revised and presented at the next meeting.

Agenda Item #3: Vote on Stoughton's Interbasin Transfer application as complete

Drury reviewed the application for the Cedar Swamp Wellfield and the review process as noted in the staff's May 13, 1999 memo. All the information needed for a review has been submitted, and staff recommends that the application be deemed complete. Drury reminded the Commission that by accepting the application as complete, there is no judgement on the merits of the project. It only starts the clock for public hearings and allows the agencies to begin the technical review.

O'Donnell asked if DFW has any specific concerns in the area that might be affected by the project. DFW has not yet raised any red flags, but the full technical review has not yet begun.

Smith noted that having the application be deemed complete provides the opportunity to obtain additional public comment and that the comments could include questions about any information that some groups may see as missing. Drury responded that the MEPA process provides the opportunity for public comment, as does the IBT process via the public hearings. Issues brought up through the public hearings must be responded to by the proponent. The watershed team also has been brought into the process.

V	Butler moved with a second by Clayton that:
O	THE COMMISSION ACCEPT AS COMPLETE STOUGHTON'S INTERBASIN
T	TRANSFER APPLICATION FOR THE CEDAR SWAMP WELLFIELD.
E	The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #4: Changes to the staff recommendation on the MWRA's Braintree-Weymouth Interbasin Transfer

Drury reviewed the issues of the MWRA's application. She noted the application was accepted as complete in February and was reviewed by state agencies and the basin team. The public hearings were held in March with no comments against the project. Last month the staff made its recommendation, noting some concern about cumulative impacts and the that MWRA did not look at both the water and wastewater systems as a whole. All commenters expressed a need to move forward with the project. The MWRA expressed concern that staff's recommendation for a review of the combined water and sewer system would add unnecessarily to the expense and time needed for this project. Drury stated it was not staff intention to do so. Since then, staff has revised its recommendation, as noted on page 13 of the revised version. The conditions will be brought back to the WRC for approval at the next meeting. Smith noted that the differences with the MWRA have been resolved and that he expects final changes will be presented at the next meeting. Drury noted that the WRC has until June 19th to make a decision and the next meeting is June 10th.

Agenda Item #5: Developing a statewide water quality monitoring program

Smith noted that the impetus for this effort is an increasing number of requests for water quality information statewide and a limited amount of state resources available to respond. He noted there are numerous types of data that are being requested. The DEP and USGS have been looking at the resources needed for various kinds of data production. Dunn noted that assessing the needs is difficult and that the focus today needs to be on what direction to move the project, how to best coordinate the agencies and volunteer monitoring groups.

DeSimone provided the USGS's assessment. The project was begun about two years ago and has been looking at a wide range of issues. She noted that existing programs do not currently

address all the state's water quality needs, focusing mostly on larger rivers and streams. The study's results were passed out. To mesh with existing programs and answer as many needs as possible on a statewide basis, they looked at existing conditions and then what additional needs were not being addressed. The Neponset was the pilot area to develop procedures.

As part of the effort, USGS estimated manpower, cost and other resources required for a full water quality monitoring network for the state. For each basin, about 1300 site visits would be required (depending on size and other factors), which translates into about 906 man-days or about 4.5 FTE for sample collection plus others for data management and other in-house activities at DEP. To cover the state would require multiplying these figures by 5 to cover the schedule of the basin teams active in any one year.

She compared this level of assessment with the 1994 study of the Neponset. Despite a good effort, the difference is in sampling density and the number of small streams that would be covered. She discussed some alternatives that would reduce the large work load, and expense, but still provide an increased data collection level over current approaches. She concluded that the choice of approach is limited by resources, and the determination must be made as to how much money and staff need to be dedicated to the effort based on desired results. There is also the option of changing the 305b methodology that would answer some of the 305b questions and also serve the teams.

To finalize the project, they will come up with recommendations for approaches for the 305b plan, how it should be implemented in connection to the watershed teams, determine that if a probabilistic approach can be designed on a watershed basis that would satisfy 305b purposes and also supply information to the teams, that would be desirable. They need to finalize the water quality sampling sites, complete the analysis of research requirements for both, and how to engage volunteers in the design, and incorporate all this in a final report.

TMDL sampling and analysis is not a component of this effort; those are more site specific and require a lot of information be collected during one period rather than obtaining some information during one sampling cycle and more in a subsequent cycle. There may be a way to link the two, and further exploration of this option and trade-offs will be done. O'Donnell noted that nationally, the average for amount of waters assessed in any state is about 20%; Massachusetts is in that range. One of the concerns noted by Dunn is that the direction of this effort needs to be solidified, as there are many interests at work. The USGS contract ends in June. O'Donnell solicited comments on the effort and draft report. There was additional discussion of a variety of related issues. The Commission expressed its thanks to the USGS and DEP for carrying out the study, and looks forward to a final report.

The meeting was adjourned.



MG

Minutes approved 7/13/00